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THE BETHANY FAMILY

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This study by a Japanese layman is an interesting illustration of the international interest which is now developing in Bible study.

The account given of the Bethany sisters, "Martha and Mary," in the last eight verses of the tenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel is well known to every reader of the New Testament. The scene described would give an excellent theme for an oil painting fit for our study-room. It is, however, absolutely necessary to look upon this homely picture from a correct angle. A sufficient quantity of light, clear and penetrating, is needed before its hidden significance can fully be appreciated, just as one has to stand some minutes before a work of fine art in order to discover its beauties. We have been hitherto led to behold this picture in a light full of prejudices. Now it is necessary to direct upon it a light of quite a different nature, from which elements of popular prejudices are eliminated; or, in other words, we need the attitude of innocent simplicity to bring its real worth fully within our religious perception.

Let us first consider what popular versions we have of that story of the Bethany sisters and of the character of Jesus Christ as shown in his talks with them. There has been, and still is, a current conception of the individual nature of these two women which can be analyzed into three constituent parts. First, intellectually classified, Martha was foolish, while Mary was wise, be-

cause the former was a busybody, always restlessly engaged in something, yet failing to discern the relative importance of things worldly. When Jesus visited their home at Bethany, she was distracted with matters of minor importance in entertaining this noble guest. She was too busy with questions relative to their dining-table, and forgot that there was something higher for her to attend to. On the other hand, the younger sister sat still at his feet, listening to him, as described by St. Luke. Now, as a form of waiting on Jesus, this listening attitude taken by Mary is far more considerate than the trouble taken for appetizing and agreeable table arrangement. Attention given by the younger sister to the other question of higher importance entitles Mary to be called wise, while lack of similar discretion on the part of the elder sister caused Martha to be regarded as foolish.

In the second place, morally graded, Martha was frivolous, while Mary was modest. Being too much engrossed with her question how to make Jesus comfortable, Martha could not refrain from complaining in the presence of Jesus. She referred to the apparent indifference of her sister toward her in her being so busy alone. She even ventured to request him to tell her sister to come out

and help her in her work, and this she did in the presence of Jesus, to whom Mary was so earnestly listening. So far she lacked restraint, while the quiet and listening attitude of her young sister was quite appropriate to one seeking after truth and virtue. Martha seemed to be jealous of her sister's happy state, while no trace of the like feeling could be found in the least in Mary's attitude toward her busy sister. Judging from this moral point of view, Martha was quite inferior, while Mary was of a much higher order of character.

In the third place, there is a great difference in the impression given to posterity by their different characters. Despite her painstaking Martha gained for herself a poor opinion. Her name is handed down in the popular version of the story with nothing more than disparaging remarks. In sharp contrast to this Mary is understood to have been praised even by Jesus in his remarks, because she had chosen the better part, which no one could take away from her. Her fame is held in everlasting esteem by the church. It is needless to say that I have magnified their differences much beyond their real condition. The above analysis, however, of the popular conception current among the ordinary Christians of today will not be wide of its mark.

Let us now proceed to the consideration of the attitude shown by Jesus toward these sisters. Jesus seems to be understood as sharing or rather indorsing the popular conception above given. His words to Martha are commonly translated as follows: "You are distracted in too many ways. The things

you are doing are really too insignificant. What you are doing is of no vital importance." On the other hand, his remarks given to Mary are regarded as laudatory terms, such as, "You have chosen the better part. Without the useless labor or profitless anxiety engaged in by your sister you have attained to the *summum bonum* of life. No one can take it from you."

If the exposition above given be correct, the story of the Bethany sisters is of serious consequence. It will supply us with a sort of answer to the question, "What is Christianity?" That kind of moral character which Jesus praises and urges us Christians to acquire in this world will be conceived of as not requiring active participation in worldly affairs. When Christians become entangled in those unimportant matters which might as well be left in the hands of worldly people, they will meet with occasions for degrading complaints. One thing is needful in life, and that one thing is the attitude of quiet listening to the noble teaching of the Master. Worldly affairs, judged from the Christian point of view, are secular, insignificant, and profitless. The attitude opposed to this, such as mystic communion with Jesus or passive contemplation of things heavenly, is alone divine. Mary's attitude of passive listening will thus be taken as the one type of Christian life.

Now, the ideal inculcated in this way will stifle human activities and make one indifferent to active engagement in social affairs. Instances of this kind can be found too frequently in the periods of degeneration, as of Buddhism, for example. In the stages of active

growth of any religion we can find few examples of this attitude toward life. The story of the Bethany sisters, if its real sense is as given above, denotes a decline in Christianity. But is this the original teaching of our Bible? Is it Christianity as given to us by Jesus himself? We cannot help doubting it. Hence arises the need of reviewing this oil painting under a light of quite a different nature. Religious ideas are comparatively susceptible to prejudice. The words "holy" and "profane," or "secular" and "divine," which are too big or too vague for our comprehension, are nothing but the expressions of such religious prejudices. No human being or affair can be put entirely into one category or another. If too gross a classification of this sort is adopted, it will be simply because of religious prejudices on our part.

Viewed in this new light, the first feature we have to observe in this picture is the fact that Jesus loved these two sisters and their brother Lazarus. This we find in the wording of John 11:5, which says Jesus loved the three. There we find the two sisters sending word to Jesus, "He whom thou lovest is sick." They did not even need to mention the name of Lazarus. Now, the original Greek word used by the sisters to denote the love of Jesus toward them and that used in John 11:5 are quite different. The word used by the sisters is that which we generally use in connection with our family relationship. The original Greek for it is *φίλειν*. Farther on the Fourth Gospel says, "Jesus wept," when he saw the sisters and the villagers going with them to the tomb of Lazarus. Noticing this, the villagers

remarked, "Behold how he loved him." They pointed at his tears as representing his intense love for Lazarus. We have to note that the Greek word used for "love" here is again *φίλειν*.

On the other hand, the original Greek for "love" used in John 11:5 is not *φίλειν* but *ἀγαπᾶν*. The connotation of the latter word is more that of respect than of what we generally understand by the word "love" in its human relationship. With more of moral element and less of sentiment in it, it is of a higher order, while the former has in it more of heart and sentiment, being consequently more fickle and unreliable. The feeling of *ἀγάπη* will be conceived only when one finds in the character of others moral elements worthy of respect and admiration, or when one becomes enthusiastic in seeking to unfold, develop, and perfect those points of strength in their personality. The sentiment of *φίλη* shows itself in the common relationship between parents and children, husbands and wives, or one friend and another. It does not necessarily imply any existence of the moral element.

Now, Christian love so much talked about nowadays ought to be *ἀγάπη* rather than *φίλη*. For instance, God loves men as the Heavenly Father in the sense not necessarily of effeminate sentiment or tender-hearted affection, but rather of moral respect toward the noble constituents of human character which require and deserve being perfected through the divine power. One of the fundamental principles of Christianity is that God loves us because he respects us. Inversely, when we say that we love God and other people, it should mean that we find in them something

commanding our respect and admiration, for the full revelation of which or for the complete realization of which we should contribute what little we can do.

We need to remember that Jesus' love toward these sisters and their brother in its reality was ἀγάπη and not φῶλη at all. We see, then, the old hypothesis that Martha was foolish, much inferior in her moral capacity, while Mary was much wiser and far better cultured, is exploded. Rather it becomes undeniable that each of the sisters had her own traits of character much respected by Jesus. Though they were of different types, Jesus saw in each of them noble characteristics which he could not leave, as they were, without endeavoring to bring them to perfection.

What, then, were these traits so much admired and respected by Jesus? The story of the resurrection of Lazarus gives us enough material for answering this question. Jesus visited the village of Bethany a few days after he was told of Lazarus' sickness. Now, Martha was the first one to hear of the arrival of Jesus, and she herself went out of the village to welcome him. While she was telling Jesus of the sad news of her brother's death, she thought of her sister waiting at home. She felt that she must go back and call her sister. Meanwhile Mary, who lived in the same house, did not know, in spite of her constant devotion and recent eager expectation to see Jesus, that he had come at last. Not only that, but she was unaware of her sister's going out to welcome him. On the other hand, the way Martha returned home to call her out is quite significant. Jewish mourning customs

of those days have something similar to those still prevailing among the natives in Formosa. Fellow-villagers will gather in the house of the bereaved family and join in wailing loudly for the dead. On such an occasion Martha, the hostess, and her sister, Mary, going out and in one after another, would naturally attract the attention of the villagers. This Martha avoided cautiously enough, as is attested by the account given in John 11:28, which says, "She called Mary, her sister, secretly." Again, when Jesus told them to take away the stone from the tomb, the thoughtful Martha interrupted at once and said, "By this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days."

These data lead us to characterize Martha as a woman of sound common sense or discretion. Whatever Martha did, there was good sense in it. When she welcomed Jesus at the entrance of the village, she expressed her natural sorrow, saying that if he had been there her brother would not have died. Yet her very next remark was, "Even now I know that whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give it thee." Her heart never ruled her head. Her expression of natural sorrow was at once followed by this remark of an entirely different tone, that is, cool and reflective. Naturally enough, Jesus responded to Martha in an equally calm way and said, "Thy brother shall rise again." The reflective Martha answered him at once by saying, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Then Jesus told her that those who believe in him, though they die, yet shall live, and so on. He said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Believest

thou this?" Then she said to him, "Yea Lord: I have believed that thou art the Christ, the son of God, even he that comes into the world."

Here we have an exchange of religious views of two persons both of reflective turn of mind. Their conversation denotes busy working of two cool intellects. With some exaggeration their talk might be criticized as verging upon theological discussions. Living in the same house though she was, the younger sister, Mary, was of an entirely different type. As remarked above, she did not know when Jesus, whom she was so eagerly waiting for, actually came to the village, nor was she aware of her elder sister going out of the village to welcome him. She learned of his arrival for the first time when Martha came back and told her of the Master's call. Was she absorbed in sad sentiments occasioned by her recent bereavement or engrossed in serious contemplation before the grave and actual presence of death? Was she struggling to solve the riddle of human life, or was she beginning to fathom the deep problems of eternal life? However we may seek to explain her attitude, it was quite different from that of her elder sister. While Martha was so cautious and discreet in going out and coming back to her home, Mary started quite abruptly as soon as she was told of Jesus' arrival. Vs. 31 says, "She rose up quickly and went out." This sudden departure somewhat startled the simple and sympathetic villagers who happened to be comforting her in the house, and they followed her with the kind but conventional intention of going to the tomb and weeping with her there.

She herself did not think at all how her actions would affect those around her. When she approached Jesus, her first expression of grief occasioned by her beloved brother's death was the same as that of her sister's. But the Gospel writer adds that she fell down at his feet. While Martha had perfect self-control in the midst of her sad bereavement, a perfect type of self-possession, Mary could not keep herself standing before Jesus, nor could she say anything further to him. All that she could do then was to wail. The original Greek word used here, *κλαίειν*, conveys the idea of wailing loudly in quite a childish way. It was not the sobbing out of too great a resentment, nor was it the secret weeping, half suppressed from considerations of one's surroundings. She simply wailed, and did not know that the Jews around her did the same, out of mere conventionality, harboring at the same time a bitter hostility toward Jesus. Regardless of those around her and true to herself alone, she gave full vent to her grief. Martha had spoken to Jesus about the resurrection and life a few minutes before. But those topics had nothing to do with Mary now. See how her single-hearted wailing affected the responsive and sympathetic heart of Jesus. The writer of St. John's Gospel tells, in 2:33-35, that when he saw Mary and the Jews weeping together but with entirely different attitudes he was indignant in spirit and shuddered (*ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτόν*). At the end of this passage we have those two words, so significant and ever attractive to humankind, "Jesus wept."

From these observations we have to classify Martha as a woman prudent,

circumspect, and thoughtful in every way. On the other hand, Mary was a woman of heart and sentiment, or, in other words, of enthusiasm. Strength of mind is the characteristic of one and purity of heart is that of the other. Quite opposite to the popular version which makes Martha foolish and destitute of virtues, the facts are that she was a considerate and thoughtful character. While understood by current tradition as a meek and modest woman, Mary proved herself, in connection with the resurrection of Lazarus, a woman of perfectly natural, and consequently beautiful, sentiments. The key of her enthusiasm once struck gives the dominant note of all her actions. Here we find one of the traits in the character of the Bethany sisters so much loved and respected by Jesus.

The second scene in the Gospels where these sisters make their appearance is the house of one Simon of Bethany. Tradition calls him Simon the Leper. The feast given by this man to Jesus seems to have been held in token of his gratitude to Jesus, who had healed him. Lazarus was present there. It seems to have been quite a big banquet for a village like this. The host was one of the leading figures at Bethany. The number of guests present seems to have been quite large, more than ten of the disciples of Jesus being there.

Here we see each of the Bethany sisters taking her characteristic part in the feast, and again we find a contrast in their nature actually represented in their doings. Martha served, according to the writer of St. John's Gospel in the second verse of the twelfth chapter.

Now this word "served" is very liable to be understood in the sense that she took the part of a waiter at the table. It is a wrong interpretation arising out of the inadequate translation of the Greek *διηκόνει*. The original word is quite comprehensive in its use. It may be used of pastors taking charge of their congregations, officials discharging their duties, physicians attending to their patients, or servants preparing food, and so on. It may be used of any kind of work and employment, whether high or low. Well, then, we have to ask ourselves what kind of service Martha did at this feast.

I should say she was the manager of the whole affair. She had to attend to everything connected with it from the kitchen to the parlor. Popularly speaking, she was the caterer. That she had a remarkable business talent, an administrative ability, that she was a woman of tact, a type of well-qualified superintendent, can be gathered from this. When we consider this talent of hers in reference to the strength of her mind referred to above, we find these two traits complementing each other in a perfectly natural and harmonious personality.

What, then, did Mary do? At the feast she brought out a cruse of alabaster, full of the costly ointment called spikenard. Unsealing it in the presence of the guests, she anointed the head and feet of Jesus with the ointment, and then wiped them with her own hair. This spikenard was worth three hundred pieces of silver. In those days a piece of silver was the common rate of the laborer's wages for one day's work in Judea, something similar to that among

the natives in Formosa at present. Three hundred pieces of silver is about \$45.00, with which a day-laborer can be hired for ten months. This gives us an idea as to its value and suggests also something as to the quality of the odor which filled the house when she used it. It was a case of the most generous treatment given to a guest in Judea. According to St. John, Judas Iscariot, one of the disciples present, openly blamed her for what she did. He is represented as having expressed his own disapprobation by saying, "To what purpose hath this waste of the ointment been made? For it might have been sold for about three hundred pence and given to the poor." Judas was treasurer of Jesus and his disciples in their journeys and took charge of all their money. By nature and culture he had a quick eye at valuation of things in general. It is no wonder, then, that he at once estimated the price of spikenard brought by Mary.

Moreover, it was not Judas alone who considered Mary's liberality an extravagance which should rather be turned to some use in works of benevolence. The same sentiment was shared by almost all the disciples present. According to the other Gospels, they all were indignant at her action. They looked upon Mary with an eye of disapproval as doing something useless and wasteful. The writer of the Fourth Gospel has a comment here. He says that Judas was actuated, not by his sympathy with the poor, but rather because he was constantly squeezing something out of the money-bag put in his charge. We have to reconsider a statement like this. Judas Iscariot was

elected as their treasurer simply because he had ability of that kind, and there is no reason to call him a thief from the first. That he made an estimate of the probable price of the ointment was a spontaneous working of his intellect—by no means an evidence of his thievish spirit or pickpocket practices. Not only Judas, but almost all the other disciples joined in blaming her deed. Nevertheless, the writer of the Fourth Gospel puts a stigma upon Judas alone. This is quite a significant point for us to note. A short time after this Judas betrayed Jesus to the priests for thirty pieces of silver, about four dollars and a half. Whenever the disciples thought later on of the miserable end of their Master's life, their indignation and hatred concentrated upon this man of Kerioth.

But here again we have to stop and turn back to Mary, in whose disapproval Peter, John, Judas, and others had an equal share. She herself had no anticipation at all of what the disciples would think of her action. She did her best only for the purposes of entertaining Jesus, with no thought that it would call forth such hard remarks against her. As a treasured possession of a woman in the sub-tropical region, the ointment was the best, and Mary gave the best of all her possessions to her guest.

Some understand this in an absurd way and say, "Mary kept this ointment in anticipation of Jesus' burial, and she used it now. Her action is something unusual done on an unusual occasion. It is no index at all of Mary's general nature." Again I say this view is absurd. We have farewell meetings given by or for persons going away; but no farewell banquet can be given by

or for one who is going to die before long. The feast was by no means given by Simon with such an intention. Moreover, the simple and innocent villagers as well as the grateful host had no presentiment yet of the approaching death of Jesus. At the table of the Last Supper we find accidental evidence of this lack of presentiment in the spirit of rivalry among his disciples, for each desired to be greatest in the Heavenly Kingdom. See how optimistic and light-hearted they still were about their own future! Even the disciples themselves were not yet aware that Jesus' death was so near. Whatever anxiety may have been conceived by Mary, she had no intention at all of anointing his head and feet with spikenard as a preparatory service for his burial.

It is true that Jesus himself had already a clear insight of his own destiny and knew that his was pressing on, as attested by his words, "Let her alone; why trouble her? She hath wrought a good work on me. The poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could. She hath anointed my body aforehand for the burying." From this it is clear enough in what spirit Jesus took her anointing. As an illustration of his character this means much. With a clear insight into his own fate, he yet accepted the invitation of the good-natured villagers and presented himself at the feast. A noble trait of his character, that is, his making the most of other people's kindness, can be discovered here. But his answer is no proof at all that Mary anointed Jesus with any other purpose beyond the immediate act of hospitality. His dis-

ciples may not have fully understood what he meant. Nevertheless, they at once changed their attitude toward Mary as they heard from their Master something apparently of serious significance.

Now, as for Mary, we can observe the same trait of enthusiasm in this scene. There was no affectation at all in what she did. She may often have incurred some unpleasant remarks from certain people of reserved habits, as exemplified here. Whether she suffered or not from such spontaneous outpouring of her nature, she was a woman of enthusiastic type, while her elder sister was a woman of business talents and administrative abilities.

There are only three passages in the Gospels in which we find facts about the Bethany sisters. We have already studied two of them, and the one remaining gives us the substance of our story of the Bethany home. Chronologically arranged, this story ought to come first, the resurrection of Lazarus following this. In the last place comes the feast given at the house of Simon. I have, however, inverted this order intentionally, so that the character study of the two sisters could be made more effective. Now, let us turn to the story of the Bethany home.

After the analysis of their personalities as given above, one reading the story as given by Luke (10:38-42) with a free and simple mind will be struck at once by the calm and peaceful atmosphere prevailing there. Their respective individualities attracted the respect and admiration even of Jesus. The beauty of this home evidently consisted in the co-operation and harmony of the two

loving sisters. With this general conception in mind, let us review our text verse by verse. Vs. 40 says: "Martha was cumbered [that is, distracted] about much serving." We are prone to understand this as if she were unduly vexed in providing entertainment for the guest, while the original Greek word used here simply means her attention was distracted. It represented the mental attitude of a discreet and thoughtful woman busily engaged in her household management and overseeing all the affairs connected with the kitchen, parlor, and dining-room. She had not the slightest displeasure in her heart, but was perfectly delighted at the visit of this rare guest, and was cheerfully engaged in entertaining him.

The same verse says: "She came up" to him, which means "stopped" near him. That is, she just did this on her way to or from the kitchen. This does not in the least imply that she approached Jesus to make a complaint. Then she said, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve you alone? Bid her therefore that she help me." Light determines sight: these words can easily be misunderstood. Martha did not intend at all that Jesus should command Mary for her benefit and pleasure to come out and help her. More plainly translated, it would be something like "I wish she would help me."

We have to analyze the sentiment with which she said this. Did she really hope to be helped by her sister? No, I understand this as a piece of pure pleasantry. Suppose Mary went out to the kitchen to help her, would Martha be pleased with that? With her ability

and discretion, almost everything would have been ready. Moreover, it is erroneous to suppose, as some do, that the Bethany home was quite poor. It may be true that the sisters lived in the same house with Lazarus. But what ground is there to say that their brother was poor? We have indeed the name Lazarus as the name of a sick beggar, but how can we infer from this that Martha and Mary were poor too? The name Lazarus is a name quite common among the Jewish people. It is a popular contraction of Eleazar, so often found in the Old Testament. The name itself suggests nothing about the social standing of one bearing it. It is a hasty tradition that understood this parable as based upon facts and considered the name Lazarus in it to be that of the brother of the Bethany sisters. It is not yet clear to us why Jesus gave no personal names in the other parables while he did so in this one alone. At any rate it is more reasonable to consider the Bethany home as a middle-class home in its manner of life than as a poor family.

Evidently this was not a family without a servant in it. To believe that Jesus came to stay overnight with quite a poor family is much harder for us. In a family of some means Martha could easily manage to attend to her kitchen affairs without Mary's assistance. Looking at the same thing from the opposite side, it is most common in entertaining the guest to have someone of the family sit and talk with him after he enters the room. It was Mary's part to do that now, and it would be indiscreet to call her away from her part and make her attend to kitchen affairs. None of us would do that on such an occasion, even

if we were a little too busy in other parts of our house.

Considering all these things, her words were undoubtedly no complaint forced out of necessity.

Moreover, it is already clear enough that they were no bitter expression of jealousy on the part of Martha. Why, then, did she speak as she did? I consider this as nothing more or less than an innocent pleasantry, said out of pure innocence and received by the other with an equal degree of good will. The calm and peaceful atmosphere felt in the intercourse of those innocent people was the greatest comfort to Jesus. It is entirely erroneous to consider Martha as actuated by a feeling of jealousy or Mary as required to help her sister. Viewed in this light, the answer made by him becomes more significant. He said, "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful, for Mary hath chosen the good part which shall not be taken away from her."

Now, choosing the good part mentioned here has nothing to do with any puzzling problem of ethical discussion. He did not mean to classify Mary's action as good and that of Martha as its opposite. Their conversation was of far simpler nature. To use plainer language, Mary was told that she had drawn a happier lot, and that no one could change it after she had once drawn it. There was nothing too grave or serious in the innocently happy atmosphere of this home. Jesus talked to them with no didactic purpose nor with a sermonizing air. Everything was simple and innocent here. Someone may remark that with this exposition

the New Testament passage becomes all too plain and not Scripture-like as a text. That is true, and the remarkable beauty of this passage lies in its plain simplicity, its being absolutely unscriptural in the formal, moral, or theological sense.

Viewed in this light, free from prejudices, the real worth of this story will at once be seen to consist in its absence of didacticism. Our Scripture says in vs. 42, "One thing is needful." This is an appropriate expression of religious views, one which may be made good use of, according to its various applications. But let us ask ourselves if this is a remark well fitted to the scene described. One cannot but notice in it too much of priestcraft, and it is quite doubtful if a serious phrase like this would really be used by Jesus under such circumstances.

We cannot go into the detailed study of textual criticism now. Yet roughly speaking, the New Testament was at first a collection of copied letters, undoubtedly very difficult to be read, and more so in its later transcriptions. Men were so perplexed in reading it in its original form that they began to group together words and then phrases and clauses, so that it should be more legible. We are told that the book was only quite recently printed in its present form of verse divisions. In 1551 Robert Stephens produced such an edition for the first time. It is no wonder, then, that we find so many unnatural breaks in its passages. In the next place there are various texts of the Bible quite incompatible with each other. An examination of the passages now called vss. 41 and 42 shows at once that some original texts of the Bible do not have

the sentence in question. This is quite remarkable. Some of the leading scholars will read this passage as "Martha, Martha, thou art (too) anxious. Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her," and they omit the two sentences found in our version, that is, "thou art troubled about many things. But one thing is needful." Omitting these sentences, parts of the innocent dialogue become better fitted to each other, without a useless remark or a sermonizing phrase in it. In our version these sentences cannot but appear to be a little out of place to those who observe the natural flow of the simple and innocent family conversation. To me it seems that the first of these two omitted sentences is a paraphrase of the sentence, "You are anxious," being a later insertion. The second sentence, "One thing is needful," is most probably a comment put in by some devotional person as a result of his sense of something wanting in the text. Such persons would quite naturally think that the very fact of the story of the Bethany home being given a place in the Gospels is a proof of its having some profound significance. Religious talks are most likely to be touched with some such conceptions as the root ideas or first principles of life. The simple words of Jesus to Martha that she was too anxious, while Mary had drawn the good part for herself, would lead people of such a meditative bent of mind to contemplate the quiet listening attitude of Mary in contrast to Martha's being careworn. They would be prone to ponder that human life is simple in its real essence, not many charming features being required

for its enchantment. They would soon write down in their own Bible, "One thing is needful," as their own comment. We are very likely to make such after-insertions in letters we write or receive, and such an inserted note will become quite hard to be distinguished before long from the original context. The case would be far more confusing in papyrus or parchment.

Apart from this question of text-criticism we get a glimpse of the noble personality of Jesus himself in this passage. This will form the closing part of my paper. The simple and innocent character of Jesus and his calm and quiet attitude in all sorts of conditions are clearly manifested here, as we have seen above. Now, there are two phases most attractive to us in our study of great men. One is the dynamic side of our lives and the other is the static side, in which they show more or less passive adjustment of themselves to their various circumstances. We may call these public or private aspects of their lives, both of which must be taken into account in the study of their true character. It would require too much space to quote here how Confucius, the Chinese sage, behaved in the field of Chun and Tsai (in the province of Shangtung), where he nobly endured persecutions and privations. The story is always fresh with inspiration to us. In comparing Jesus with Confucius some Japanese thinkers often remark that the former stands higher in his earnest activities, while the latter excels in his calm and quiet generosity. This may not be true, but it is quite reasonable that such a remark should be made. For in the character study of Jesus

materials made use of by the majority of modern writers are rather one-sided. Their attention is directed rather to his missionary zeal, his bold and earnest aggressiveness toward the ruling classes in the religious community of Palestine, and so on. On the other hand, his dove-like gentleness and lamblike meekness constitute the aspect of his personality, which is difficult to be appreciated even by us Christians in this age of self-aggrandizement and self-advertisement. It is no wonder, then, that the non-Christian community cannot clearly recognize this higher half of the life of Jesus, grounding its judgment upon what is found in the so-called Christian literature of the modern world too much contaminated with the spirit of materialism and commercialism. Such persons will misunderstand Jesus simply because we misrepresent him to the public. That is, we who have to reflect his life and character in both of its aspects, public and private, cannot yet realize them so fully in our own thought and conduct. Now, in the whole biography of Jesus the episode of the Bethany home is perhaps the best example of his gentleness and meekness, or, in other words, the character of his private life.

With that end in view, let us consider the time-relation of this episode. It occurred either at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, that is, the Jewish autumnal feast held in November, 29 A.D., or at the time of the Feast of Dedication, that is, the winter feast held in December of the same year; in other words, it occurred two or three months before his crucifixion. The resurrection of Lazarus was in the spring of the year

30, and Simon's feast took place on Friday, March 31, of the same year. If this chronological arrangement is correct, the last incident occurred only six or seven days before his execution. Although the people of Bethany did not yet perceive that the cross was already overshadowing him, Jesus himself clearly perceived what lay before him.

Next let us turn to the consideration of the locality. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, the stronghold of Jesus' deadly enemies. Consider for a moment that on the one hand those enemies had been eagerly engaged in sharpening their swords and spears for their ominous purpose, and on the other hand that Jesus was quietly passing the time at the home of the Bethany sisters or with the homely villagers. It was as if each party were perfectly unconscious of the other. But the fact is that our Lord was absolutely unconcerned about his enemies, although he knew full well what they were about. There is an old Chinese saying that heroes deceive men. But this saying has no application at all to what Jesus did or said. There was perfect harmony between his inner and outer life. He was always master of himself, and, because of this secret, he enjoyed Simon's good will and the sisters' hospitality to the fullest extent. That light-toned pleasantry of drawing a good lot was possible, and at the same time quite appropriate, to one who was altogether free from useless anxieties. Jesus Christ bleeding for us on the cross is a sight which always commands our adoration, and yet we do not know whether that scene appeals more strongly to our admiration than his attitude at the

Bethany home. Suppose we were placed in a like situation. Perhaps a so-called evangelical zeal would occupy us too much and tempt us into sermonizing. We should not in such a mood be contented with a passing and playful remark about Mary's good lot. Very likely we should boast of one thing needful, as if we monopolize it, and should be addicted to sermonizing, to the discomfort of others. Most probably we should wonder at the thoughtlessness of the villagers, the hard-heartedness of the disciples, and the cold indifference of the people at large. See how differently the mind of Jesus works. It is always free as flowing water, never stopping or stumbling at any obstacle before it. Jesus was perfectly disinterested himself and ready at any time to give fair judgment and due sympathy to every one of those with whom he came in contact. A perfect type of humanity! Let us hope that this aspect of his personality may more and more be made known to the world. Our Christian ideas and conduct will be the only right channel for that purpose. But what was the secret of his personality? It was nothing but the outcome of his own convictions. When Lazarus died, Jesus was not in Judea, and, as he said to his disciples, "Let us go into Judea again," they remonstrated in earnest, referring to the recent attempt of the Jews to stone him. In answer to this Jesus said to them, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because the light is not in him." Undoubtedly he referred here to one of his own convic-

tions that he was still walking in the broad daylight, whatever enemies might rage about him, and that his night was not yet come, when he was to stop his work, not because of the excessive greatness of the hostile power, but rather according to the divine ordinance of the time. His second conviction is embodied again in his own words: "In my father's house there are many mansions," even if the dark clouds may for a time overshadow the whole world. He attained these two convictions through his own sufferings. He formed the habit of looking steadfastly to the goal set before him at the end of the way of righteousness he was then pursuing. Vicissitudes of his life had no power to divert his steady footsteps at any time. Such was the faith that he had constantly to exercise through obedience to the Heavenly Father as his beloved son. His noble attitude at the Bethany home was nothing but the natural outcome of his own faith of this kind. Perhaps he was then quite unconscious of that, and if so, the beauty of his mind is all the more remarkable. Here we have the greatest charm of the picture before us.

In conclusion, we return to the starting-point of this character sketch. Christianity never puts a set value upon us. Any one-sided classification of men is against its principle. On the contrary, it recognizes an individual nature as the gift of the Father to each of his sons. No two men are alike: the strength of some is in their business activities, and the beauty of some is in their enthusiastic temperament. All are equally respectable and respected by the Father. Each of us has his own individuality, the intrinsic value of which is equal to

the blood of the Lamb. Thus it is the spiritual vitality of Christianity that discovers, disciplines, and perfects our individualities.

Under the inspiration of such appreciative friendship of Jesus, hasty Simon, the son of Judas, could finally present the Petrine strength of the strongest pillar of the apostolic church. Through the grace of his profound insight into the individual natures and of his unique power of perfecting our personalities practical Martha and enthusiastic Mary live forever in one of the most beautiful stories of the Gospels, in spite of the apparently wise but superficial estimates often given. Christ's salvation is nothing but the unfolding of this spiritual vitality. We believe in our salvation after death. But what we need first of all is a daily salvation, the salvation at every moment of our life. With a vague self-knowledge, a weak self-confidence, a feeble self-respect, and an unreliable self-help, our individualities are prone to be fettered and obstructed from their full development, because of the numerical force of the mass and of the magical power of the views and ideas conceived by the se-

lected few. At this crisis it is the voice and countenance of Jesus alone that strengthens us to be true to our own selves above the blinding storms of the shallow but immediate interests and comforts in this world. The more we taste of such daily salvation of individuals the more shall others with us be saved and the more the eternal life of each shall be realized among us. Our eternal life is not a state of happy indolence or monotonous continuance beginning beyond the grave. Rather it is a life commencing at this very moment and diffusing itself through manifold activities into the everlasting future. Our salvation will be an empty dream, however high-sounding our talk about it, if, without a sense of the holiness of the very spot we are now standing on in society, and without an effort to realize the character fit for this self-consciousness, we do not experience, at every moment and at every turn of our life, such spiritual vitality on both phases of our personality, quiet and active, private and public. Though a fragmentary narrative, the story of the Bethany sisters is thus a symbol of Christ's gospel.